

In Order to Receive God's Mercy, We Have to Be Merciful



Receiving God's mercy ignites in us the drive to become "instruments of mercy," especially to the weakest and the marginalized, says our Holy Father; in fact "The more we receive, the more we are called to share it with others; it cannot be kept hidden or kept only for ourselves. It is something which burns within our hearts, driving us to love, thus recognizing the face of Jesus Christ, above all in those who are most distant, weak, alone, confused and marginalized."

"Mercy seeks out the lost sheep, and when one is found, a contagious joy overflows. Mercy knows how to look into the eyes of every person; each one is precious, for each one is unique," the Pope said during his address. The expressions of God's mercy in His encounters with us are "numerous," he said; "it is impossible to describe them all, for the mercy of God continually increases." "God never tires of showing us mercy and we should never take for granted the opportunity to receive, seek and desire this mercy," he said.

Mercy, "is something always new, which inspires awe and wonder as we see God's immense creativity in the ways he comes to meet us." Throughout Scripture, God has frequently revealed himself as mercy, the Pope observed. "How great and infinite is the nature of God, so great and infinite his mercy, to the point that it is greatly challenging to describe it in all its entirety."

Francis cited a passage from the prophet Isaiah, and its "extremely evocative" image of God holding each of us in his embrace. He had this passage in mind for the image of the Jubilee, he said: "I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them" (Isaiah 11:4).

"How much tenderness and love is expressed here!" the Pope said. "Jesus not only carries humanity on his shoulders, but his face is so closely joined to Adam's face that it gives the impression they are one." "Precisely because of his mercy God became one of us," he said. By being touched by God's mercy in Jesus, moreover, we are in turn "inspired to become instruments of his mercy," the Pope continued.

"It is easy to speak of mercy, yet more difficult to become its witness." He spoke of the many ways in which mercy comes to us: "closeness and tenderness," "compassion and solidarity," "consolation and forgiveness" – and this in turn compels us to share mercy with others, he said. "We ought not to fear for it is a love which comes to us and involves us to such an extent that we go beyond ourselves, enabling us to see his face in our brothers and sisters," he said. "Let us allow ourselves to be humbly guided by this love; then we will become merciful as the Father is merciful.

A faith that does not allow us to put our fingers into the wounds of Jesus' side "is not faith," the Pope said. "It is not a faith that is capable of being merciful. "It is not faith. It is an idea. It is ideology. Our faith is incarnate, in a God who was made flesh," he said, "who was wounded for us." If we want to believe "with seriousness," the Pope said, "we must come close to and touch the wounds, caress the wounds," while bowing our heads to allow others to "caress our wounds." "Let us open our hearts so that the Spirit can transform us; thus forgiven and reconciled, we will become witnesses to the joy that brims over on finding the risen Lord, alive among us." LGaetano